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The Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse and Childhood Sexual Experiences on Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identity

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by

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Anecdotal observations among clinicians and laypersons suggest that some men who have been sexually abused by men as children experience more homosexual sexual attraction and engage in more homosexual sexual behavior than men who have not been sexually abused. These men often report feeling "confused" about their sexuality. Some men also report believing that there is a relationship between their homosexual feelings and behaviors and their sexual abuse as children. Moreover, research in the area of sexual abuse reveals that disproportionately more men with sexual abuse histories identify as gay and bisexual than men with non-sexual abuse histories, especially when the perpetrator of the abuse was male. However, very few studies have specifically explored the relationship between sexual orientation and sexual abuse. The proposed study will examine the relationship between sexual orientation in men and their reports of childhood sexual abuse by males. Additionally, the proposed study will distinguish

between those individuals that have interpreted their childhood sexual experiences as negative (or abusive) and those who have not. Past research in this topic has categorized participants as "abused" based on a set of predetermined benchmarks (e.g., age differential, specific acts performed, etc.,) while not including the individual's subjective account/interpretation of the experience. This research will consider how the distinction between intergenerational sexual contact that is experienced as abusive and intergenerational sexual contact that is not experienced as abusive relates to sexual orientation and sexual identity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Certainly, the population of sexually abused men is large enough that it warrants attention within the field of psychological research. Research in the field of male sexual abuse estimates that between 4% - 16% of men report having been sexually abused at some point in their lives (Holmes and Slap, 1998). Research also indicates that men who have been sexually abused as children are at a higher risk for psychological disorders, including personality disorders, depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation (Walker *et al,* 2005; Miller & Lisak, 1999). Nevertheless, there seems to be relatively scarce amount research on men that have been sexually abused as children and its subsequent effects on their lives especially when compared to the amount of research on female sexual abuse. Psychologists have insufficient empirical data on the outcomes of men that have been sexually abused resulting in little information about how to best treat them.

Anecdotal observations among clinicians and laypersons suggest that some men who have been sexually abused by men as children experience more homosexual sexual attraction and homosexual sexual behavior than men who have not been sexually abused. These men often report feeling "confused" about their sexuality and some report believing that there is a relationship between their homosexual feelings and behaviors and their sexual abuse as children. In addition, there is some evidence that a disproportionate amount of men with sexual abuse histories identify as gay and bisexual, especially when the perpetrator of the abuse was also male (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005; Holmes & Slap, 1998). However, very few studies have specifically explored the relationship between sexual orientation and sexual abuse.

Even less attention has been given to how an individual's perception of his childhood sexual experience/abuse is related to his (subsequent) sexual orientation. Intergenerational sexual experiences (sexual experiences between a child and an adult, a child and an adolescent, or an adolescent and an adult) are not all necessarily perceived as abuse (Steever, et al., 2001). Indeed, there may be a relationship between how a childhood sexual experience is perceived and an individual's (subsequent) sexual orientation.

The purpose of this research will be to determine whether early intergenerational homosexual encounters are associated with later homosexual or bisexual orientation in men, and to determine what role (if any) the individual's perception of the sexual experience contributes to this relationship. Insight into this relationship will allow a fuller theoretical understanding of this population and will facilitate the development of better therapeutic interventions for these men.

Chapter 2: Integrated Analysis

Inattention to Sexually Abused Males

The amount of research on male sexual abuse is limited. The scarcity of this research becomes more apparent in comparison to the abundance of research on sexual abuse in females. Up until recently this population of men and boys has been severely overlooked in both psychological and medical research. In fact, many sexual abuse and childhood sexual experience studies have been composed entirely and exclusively of female subjects, altogether excluding males from their samples (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005; Dhaliwal, *et al*, 1996). As a result, the scientific community knows little about this population of men. This should be of particular concern to treatment providers—medical, pharmacological, and psychological—as treatments and interventions concerning this population are based on a small amount of research specific to male sexual abuse victims.

The lack of attention and knowledge of this population of men and boys in the research community of psychology is evident in the practice of psychology. Fifty percent of psychologists reportedly never address sexual abuse with any of their male clients and only 26% of psychologists feel proficient enough in the topic to address it with their male clients (Lab, et al., 2000). This lack of clinical attention to male sexual abuse is *not* for lack of men that have been sexually abused, a survey of studies on childhood sexual abuse estimates prevalence to be between 4% - 16% of men report being sexually abused as children (Holmes & Slap, 1998). These numbers do not speak to the number of men that have been sexually traumatized as adults or those men that have chosen not to

disclose their experiences.

Correlates of Child Sexual Abuse in Males

Research reviewing the differences between male and female child sexual abuse (CSA) victims notes several distinctive characteristics of male CSA. Compared to female victims of CSA, male CSA victims are more likely to be victims of same-sex molestation (Fischer, 1992), experience greater violence and physical harm related to sexual abuse (Steever Follette, & Naugle, 2001), and more likely to be victimized by multiple perpetrators (Faller, 1989). The current body of literature contains both clinical observations and empirical data that note the prevalence of psychological difficulties (Gilgun & Reiser, 1990), and deficits in social and sexual functioning among men who have experienced child sexual abuse (Walker *et al* 2005; Steever, Follette, & Naugle, 2001; Holmes & Slap, 1998; Dimlock, 1988). A review of research on the effects of CSA on men indicates that this population is at an increased risk for depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, personality disorders, poor self image, substance abuse problems, suicidality, and sexual disorders (Holmes & Slap, 1998). Clinical literature also notes difficulties in controlling anger among this population as a frequent and long term consequence of CSA (Steever Follette, & Naugle, 2001).

Miller and Lisak (1999) who studied personality disorders in college men with a history of childhood sexual and physical abuse found that this population was more likely to bear Borderline, Dependent, and Avoidant traits than men who had no history of abuse. Men that had a history of both sexual abuse and physical abuse also showed a

higher prevalence of these disordered personality characteristics. Additionally, men with a history of both kinds of abuse also showed a significantly higher prevalence for Schizoid personality traits than men with a history of only one kind of abuse or no abuse. Miller and Lisak's (1999) results also indicated that men with histories of sexual abuse were just as likely as men with histories of physical abuse to exhibit disordered personality traits. The severity of sexual abuse was linked to the severity of Borderline and Dependent personality traits, indicating that more severe sexual abuse may produce more severe psychological repercussions.

Additionally, problematic sexual dysfunction has often been cited as a long-term correlate of CSA in men, with compulsive sexual behavior being the most frequently cited long-term correlate (Steever, Follette, & Naugle, 2001; Holmes & Slap 1998; Dimlock, 1988). Steever, et al (2001) describe compulsive sexuality as including behaviors such as "frequent sexual experiences, a large number of sexual partners, frequent masturbation and extensive use of pornography, and homosexual behavior in men who identify themselves as heterosexual" (p. 191).

Child Sexuality

In order to understand the long term effects of intergenerational childhood sexual experiences and childhood sexual abuse, it is necessary to consider normative childhood sexuality and what role children's normative sexual behavior might have on their subsequent development.

Academic writing regarding child sexuality has been sparse, reflecting an

academic and social culture that may be uncomfortable regarding matters of sexuality related to children. While *abusive* sexual experiences do produce harmful effects, research reveals that humans are sexual at a very early age (Balen & Crawshaw, 2006; Dunn & Myers-Walls, 2006; Friedrich et al., 1998). Nevertheless, there remains trepidation about addressing the sexuality of children. In fact past the writings of Sigmund Freud regarding the psychosexual stages of development (Berger, 2000,) there have been few theoretic writings regarding childhood sexuality—reemphasis that there is unease in addressing this topic.

However, recently there has been an emergence of empirically based academic writings on childhood sexuality. Much of the research in this area is dedicated to underscoring the normalcy of sexuality and sexual behaviors in childhood. Resent research into Western childhood sexuality suggests that children have a normal curiosity about their own bodies and the bodies of their parents and other adults, and about the bodies of other children. Children may engage in explorative (masturbatory) play of their own bodies and may attempt to engage in explorative play with the bodies of other children and adults (Dunn & Myers-Walls, 2006). The explorative sexual play of children has been described as distinct from the goal-driven sexual endeavors of adults and adolescents (Friedrich et al., 1998). Although children do achieve pleasure from genital stimulation, it remains a less dominant interest of theirs than it is of adults. Research also indicates that how frequently and how readily children will engage in sexual play varies between individual children but more largely varies between cultures (Bullough & Bullough, 1994). Research indicates that beyond the age of eight, the extent

to which children engage in masturbatory sexual play and sexual play with others depends on how much sexual activity children have observed and how permissive the society is of sexuality in general and sexuality in children (Bullough & Bullough, 1994).

Research suggests that peer-to-peer sexual behaviors in children are relatively harmless. Starting in 1980, Okami *et al* (1997) began following 184 infants for an eighteen year longitudinal study on child sexuality. His investigations of peer-to-peer sexual encounters found no association between childhood peer sexual experiences and subsequent psychological adjustment. In Larsson and Svedin's 2001 study of 269 Swedish college students recollections of childhood sexual experiences, 30% of those who had a sexual experience with a peer before the age of 13 felt the experience had a positive effect on them as an adult, 66% thought that it had neither a positive nor negative effects, and 4% reported a negative effect due to the experience. Of those who felt the experience had a negative effect on them as an adult, all but one of the participant's experiences involved coercion (Larsson & Svedin, 2001).

This line of research points out that some childhood sexual experiences, such as masturbatory play and peer-to-peer sex play, are common and do not necessarily produce subsequent negative developmental effects.

Describing Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identity:

Defining Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identity

In research considering sexuality, researchers have noticed that the way that individuals describe or identify their sexuality does not always accord with their sexual

behaviors, attractions, emotions, etc. For instance, in a 2003 survey by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, reported that 76% of men who report having had sex with men identify as heterosexual (Pathela, 2006). Because of this discrepancy, it is important to distinguish between how one *identifies* one's sexuality and how one's sexuality is *enacted*. The term "sexual identity" will be used to denote the former and the term "sexual orientation" will be used to denote the latter in this research.

Sexual identity may be defined as an individual's *personal definition* of their sexual attraction to the same or opposite sex. Sexual orientation may be defined as an individual's *inherent* or *actual* sexual or romantic attraction to one or both sexes (Coleman, 1987). It may also be important to mention that in some academic communities the term "sexual identity" is used to describe the way in which an individual feels his/her internal gender is oriented; however, recently among psychological research the term "gender identity" has been designated for this construct.

Conceptualizing Sexual Orientation

The occurrence of same-sex (or homosexual) sexual behavior in humans has varied over time and geographical location (Caceres, *et al,* 2006; Sell, Wells, & Wypij, 2005). In a population based study of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, Sell, Wells, and Wypij (2005) found that 20.8% of men in the U.S. reported some homosexual attraction or homosexual behavior since the age of 15. Among U.S. men, 6.2% reported some homosexual behavior within the previous five years; 8.7% reported having some homosexual attraction (without homosexual behavior) since the age of 15 (Sell, Wells, & Wypij, 2005). Although different cultures and different time periods

would likely yield different results, clearly the prevalence of homosexual behavior and homosexual attraction is not rare.

While identifying oneself as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, etc is a convenient way of categorizing oneself as a sexual being, sexual orientation as a construct may be less discrete. (Sell, n.d.; Klein, *et al*, 1985; Kinsey, 1948). In 1948, Alfred Kinsey revolutionized the understanding of sexuality by suggesting that sexual orientation exists not as a binary construct (heterosexual/homosexual,) but rather as a continuum, where exclusive heterosexuality and exclusive homosexuality served as extreme end-points:

> Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects.
>
> While emphasizing the continuity of the gradations between exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual histories, it has seemed desirable to develop some sort of classification which could be based on the relative amounts of heterosexual and homosexual experience or response in each history... An individual may be assigned a position on this scale, for each period in his life.... A seven-point scale comes nearer to showing the many gradations that actually exist (Kinsey, 1948, pp. 639, 656).

Based on his theories, Kinsey created the Kinsey Scale which measures sexual orientation on a seven point scale where 0 is exclusively heterosexual and 7 is exclusively

homosexual, with varying potential sexual orientations falling between. Kinsey postulated that most adult males actually fell somewhere between 1 (Predominantly Heterosexual, Incidentally Homosexual) and 6 (Predominantly Homosexual, Incidentally Heterosexual,) that is to say, he believed few men (and women) could be exclusively heterosexual or exclusively homosexual in their orientation (Kinsey, 1948).

Expanding on Kinsey's work, Klein, *et al* (1985) proposed that sexual orientation was a multifaceted construction that could not be adequately measured in one dimension. In his research, Klein broke the broad construct of sexual orientation into seven separate components: sexual attraction, sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, self-identification (sexual identity,) and heterosexual/homosexual lifestyle association/culture association. Within each of these components (subscales) Klein utilized Kinsey's seven-point rating system (exclusively heterosexual – exclusively homosexual.) Klein also believed that sexual orientation and the components that make it up are not necessarily static. Klein felt that it was possible (and perhaps likely) that an individual's orientation might change over time. Additionally, an individual's acceptance or identification with their sexual orientation may vary over time.

More recently, some theorists have criticized both the Kinsey and Klein scales for placing homosexuality and heterosexuality together on a single continuum. These researchers suggest that the sexual orientation may be more accurately represented with an individual's homosexual feelings and behaviors measured separately from his/her heterosexual feelings and behavior, rather than along the same continuum (Sell, n.d.). This would allow that an individual could be high or low on either, both, or neither

orientation, creating more versatility in the way sexuality is conceptualized.

Potential Biological Determinants of Sexual Orientation

Alongside, the long history of research into the conceptualization of sexual orientation has been an equally long history of research regarding the cause of variations in sexual orientation. And despite extensive research into this area, the cause of variations in human sexual orientation remains unresolved. Science has yet to successfully implicate a solitary biological or environmental determinant of human sexual orientation. Nevertheless, there remains much debate and speculation about how sexual orientation is determined. It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter fully into that discussion; however, in considering how sexual orientation might be affected by intergenerational childhood sexual experiences and childhood sexual abuse, it is necessary to survey recent contributions to the discussion of sexual orientation determinants.

Most researchers agree that biology plays some role in the development of sexual orientation. Differences between the brains of homosexual and heterosexual men (LeVay, 1991; LeVay 1994) and differences in prenatal hormone exposure (Williams, *et al,* 2000) have been documented. Biological research has also suggested that homosexuality may run in families. However, it is unclear whether this relationship is due to genetic factors, environmental factors, or both (Bailey & Pillard, 1991; Bailey, Pillard, et al., 1993). More recent research seems to implicate maternal inheritance (Hamer, Hu, et al. 1993; Hu, et al., 1995), implying a genetic, biological, and/or social factors past down via the mother.

However, attempts to replicate the findings of many maternal inheritance studies have been unsuccessful (Bailey, et al., 1999). Other research into causes of sexual orientation (homosexuality specifically) suggests that the birth order of sons may predict homosexuality to some degree. This is known as "progressive maternal immunization of sex-specific proteins" in the biological community (Blanchard, et al., 2006; Rahman, 2005). Specifically, homosexual men have been reported as having a greater number of older brothers than controls. Additional potential determinants include prenatal sex hormone exposure (Williams, *et al,* 2000) and variations in early brain development (neurodevelopmental instability) (Rahman, 2005).

The Ontology of Sexual Orientation

Some academics have stepped away from the debate of determinants of sexual orientation in order to more broadly consider what sexual orientation (or the *term* "sexual orientation") truly represents. In this section I will overview the predominant meta-theoretical perspectives of sexual orientation. There are two primary meta-theories of sexual orientation are essentialism and social constructivism.

Essentialism

Essentialism (generally) refers to "a belief that certain phenomena are natural, inevitable, universal, and biologically determined (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). With regard to sexual orientation, essentialist theory considers sexual orientation to be a real, constant, and deterministic category by which human beings may be defined. Essentialist theory argues that homosexuality is an intrinsic human quality, one that does not vary

across history or time (Ortiz, 1993). Michael Kimmel (1993) writes, “Sexual essentialism refer[s] to primordial, biological categories which claim that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity ‘is a culture-independent, objective and intrinsic property’” (p.574). For example, essentialist theory maintains that a gay individual transported from one time and/or place to another would still be gay even if s/he grew up in that time and place. That is, sexual orientation identity categories are stable and do not vary with social context. As Ortiz (1993) has put it, “Essentialists in general define gay people as those who experience same-sex desire, believe that there have always been gay people everywhere, and hold that it makes sense to speak of people who experience same-sex desire as a single group regardless of where and when they lived.”

Deterministic theories of sexual orientation (such as the biological theories mentioned in the previous section,) which try to solve “what makes a person gay,” by their very nature interpret sexual orientation in an essentialist manner—including both theories of biological determinism and social determinism. By asking “what makes a person gay” one inherently is assuming that homosexuality is something that a person *is* or can become. That is, by some act of nature or nurture, a person can be cast categorically as a homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual.

Social Constructivism

Unlike essentialism, social constructivist theory does hold that sexual orientation categories vary with social context. Social constructivist theory maintains that homosexuality (for example) is a property that only has relevance in certain historical and social contexts. Social constructivism represents the belief that sexual orientation

categories are historically and culturally conceived rather than being inherent to each individual and determined by any one or any combination of biological or social factors. Social constructivist believe that sexual orientations and sexual identities (as we currently understand) them are invented distinctions. Paraphrasing Foucault's take this topic, Kimmel (1993) wrote, "There are only bodies and pleasures; all the rest is social organization and interpretation" (p. 574).

Social constructivists point to the relatively recent categorization of homosexuality as an identity--homosexuality did not emerge as a distinct identity until the late 1800s. It was at this point that is was described as an "inborn and therefore irrepressible drive" (Kimmel, 1993, p. 575). Before this distinction there were, of course, homosexual *behaviors*; however, there was no identity associated to them. About this, Foucault wrote that "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny." (Kimmel, 1993, p. 575). Here, Foucault makes the point that a shift was made from an identification of a sexual practice to an identification of individuals associated with it. In short, social constructivist theory holds that sexuality happens in countless variations, and that the categorization of concrete sexual orientations or sexual identities is arbitrary.

It is worth pointing out that the inherent undermining of deterministic theories of sexual orientation by social constructivism is controversial. In the attempt to achieve equal rights for homosexuals, vast effort has been put forth to emphasize that homosexuality is not a choice, but rather is determined by something outside the immediate control of the individual. Such is the goal of much of the research related to

sexual orientation and biology, genetics, etc. Some opponents see social constructivism's rejection of determinants of (homo)sexuality as a step backward in the battle for social acceptance and equal rights with regard to sexuality.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Relationship between Sexual Abuse and Sexual Orientation

In the following two sections I will consider two psychological theories that may provide insight into how child sexual abuse or early child sexual contact might affect sexual orientation.

Behaviorism

Behavioral psychology or Behaviorism is a theoretical perspective that prefers observable occurrences as relevant data in understanding and interpreting an individual. Behavioral theory directly attributes human motivation to an individual's learning and adaptation to their experiences and environment. Consequences of an individual's actions or experiences will produce environmental responses that if positive will reinforce behavior and if negative will attenuate behavior (Murdock, 2004). B.F. Skinner (1953) remarked that food and sex are primary and basic human reinforcers. That is, they are based on basic human survival needs and are of the strongest of human motivators. Skinner noted that physical affection, sexual contact, and orgasm may yield sexual reinforcement—with physical affection producing the weakest reinforcement and orgasm producing the strongest reinforcement.

Varying levels of sexual reinforcement, or conditioning, has also been

scientifically documented in mice (Crawford, Holloway, & Domjan, 1993). In varying the reward mice received at the successful completion of a maze, researchers noted that male mice learned to complete the maze more quickly if they were allowed to mount a female mouse to orgasm, than if they were allowed to mount with penetration and without orgasm, than if they were allowed to mount without penetration. Additional animal sexual reinforcement research indicates that affinities due to sexual reinforcement are wide and varied, including, preferred scents, preferred cages, preferred handlers and trainers, etc.; moreover, these preferences were strongest during sexual activity (Crawford, Holloway, & Domjan, 1993). Clearly, sexual stimulation and (to a greater degree) orgasm are strong positive reinforcers. Indeed, it has been shown that male mice that are allowed to mount other (surgically capable) male mice will continue to seek out male mice as sexual objects. Furthermore, male mice that mounted female mice, which had their vaginas surgically closed stopped seeking out female mice as sexual objects. However, in both cases, male mice that were allowed to mount sexually viable female mice quickly began to again seek out female mice as sexual objects.

This conditioned change in sexual behavior could be interpreted as a change in sexual orientation, if only a temporary one. So then, a controversial question arises: Can a sexual orientation, or something that resembles a sexual orientation, be conditioned in a human being? If so, it seems plausible that sexual encounters might act as a conditioned stimulus in victims of sexual abuse as well as children that have had early homosexual sexual encounters.

As late as the 1970s, psychologists attempted to use sexual and orgasmic

conditioning to affect the sexual interests of their research subjects (Letourneau & O'Donohue, 1997; Kantorowitz, 1978). The conditioning methods generally consisted of having subjects masturbate to the point of orgasm while viewing a (conditioned) stimulus. These methods were often used as attempts to convert homosexual men into heterosexuality. Although currently understood to be unethical, in that homosexuality is not a disorder that requires conversion, the results of this research were not barren of effect. Researchers often reported an *initial* effect of their conditioning—subjects reported an increased sexual arousal to the conditioned stimulus. The failure came in maintaining the effect. Follow-up surveys generally yielded less than significant results (Kantorowitz, 1978). Given this information, one might expect that a male that has had a homosexual sexual encounter as a child or who has been sexually abused might only have short term homosexual interests resulting from the encounter. However, there is evidence that these effects may be seen well into adulthood (Balsam, et al, 2005; Holmes, 1998). The distinction may lie in the age at which the sexual experience occurred. A child, whose sexually is incompletely developed, may retain a more lasting effect from a sexual encounter than an adult, whose sexuality is more established. Indeed, many theories of sexual behavior maintain that sexuality, to some degree, is learned (O'Donohue, 1994). Letourneau (1997) noted that "behavioral accounts have viewed the acquisition of a sexual repertoire as resulting from both classical and operant conditioning" (p. 64). A child that experiences a sexual encounter with a man or is abused by a man may acquire into his sexual repertoire a sexual interest in men that is prolonged into his adulthood. That is to say, men experiencing homosexual sexual

feelings may be simply experiencing a conditioned response to a conditioned stimulus resulting from sexual stimulation and/or orgasm.

Psychodynamic Theory

One might also consider a psychodynamic/psychoanalytic perspective on the potential relationship between childhood sexual experiences and adult sexual orientation. Rather than regard only interpreting observable behavior as behaviorism does, psychodynamic and psychoanalytic theories also consider an individual's internal processes as motivating forces. Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theories give particularly strong consideration to the unconscious mind. Psychodynamic and psychoanalytic psychologists have maintained Freud's premise that a significant portion of drives are beyond our immediate awareness (Archer & McCarthy 2007). In considering a potential relationship between sexual orientation and early sexual experiences from a psychodynamic theoretical basis, one might interpret adult homosexual or bisexual activity from an individual who has had an (abusive) sexual relationship with an adult male as a child as a form of repetition compulsion. Repetition compulsion involves the (often unconscious) repeating of a failed or traumatic event in an effort to gain mastery over it.

Repetition compulsion has frequently been used to explain the repeated re-victimization of abuse survivors. On this topic, Irwin (1999) writes, "the classical explanation of re-victimization appeals to the psychodynamic notion of a 'repetition compulsion'… According to this account, people who fail to accommodate a traumatic experience may be subconsciously driven to reenact that experience in an endeavor to

achieve a sense of mastery over the original trauma." Repetition compulsion has also been used to explain why survivors of sexual abuse repeatedly engage in demeaning and dangerous sexual practices. In an article on female prostitutes with abuse histories, Napoli *et al* (2001) wrote that "the repetition [for demeaning sexual experiences] is born out of the sense of powerlessness that the prostitute experienced as a child and still carries with her."

Repetition compulsion may offer a theoretical grounding for the relationship between childhood sexual *abuse* and adult sexual behavior and adult sexual orientation. However, in considering men who would not rate their early sexual experiences with adult males as abusive, it seems likely that given the lack of physical and mental control a child or adolescent would have in any sexual relationship (abusive or not) with an adult, it is possible that even those individuals who interpreted their sexual experiences as neutral or positive would attempt to gain mastery over the experience as adults through such repetition. Therefore, men who had sexual contact with an adult male as a child or adolescent may attempt to gain control (or understanding) over the event or relationship that was (at least) confusing or (at most) traumatic by re-engaging in sexual situations with men in adulthood. Weille (2002) notes about repetition compulsion and sexuality "the paradoxical nature of repetition and repair, where one cannot exist without the other: 'The only way growth can occur…the only way new territory is gained is by exploring the outer limits of old vulnerabilities.'"

It is important to note that within psychoanalytic theory, repetition compulsions are considered to be defense mechanisms—offering an individual only an illusion of control

over past lived experience. Classic psychoanalytic theory would suggest that an individual with such compulsions should address the original event that prompted the repetitions in order to end them. In the context of this study, such a strict analysis would interpret the individual's homosexual/bisexuality—or at least his homosexual behavior—as a defense mechanism and perhaps pathological. The classification of one's sexual identity or sexual orientation as pathological without warrant is problematic. However, it is well documented that sexual behavior (homosexual or heterosexual) can often be a mechanism for acting-out resultant from a variety psychopathologies (Napoli *et al,* 2001). Because this particular area of research is relatively unexplored, it remains to be seen (and is outside the scope of this work) whether homosexual behavior related to childhood sexual experiences can be considered symptomatic.

Considering a Relationship between Sexual Orientation and Childhood Sexual Abuse

There is substantial data that suggests an association between a homosexual or bisexual sexual orientation and sexual abuse (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005; Holmes & Slap, 1998; Gilgun & Reiser, 1990; Johnson & Shrier, 1987). Additionally, research that has interviewed (or taken written testimonials from) male CSA survivors about their sexual orientation points out that many of men with CSA histories feel uncertain, confused, or frustrated by/about their sexual orientations and sexual identities. What's more, these men draw a relationship between their CSA and their struggles with sexuality (Gilgun & Reiser, 1990; Myers, 1989, Dimock, 1988; Johnson & Shrier, 1987).

While there is evidence for a connection between CSA and homosexuality in adulthood, the nature of this relationship remains relatively uninvestigated and unclear. Some researchers have theorized that sexual abuse interrupts "healthy" sexual identity development (Gilgun & Reiser, 1990)—implying that a homosexual or bisexual orientation is a result of CSA. Other researchers have suggested that gay and bisexual boys and adolescents may be at a higher risk for sexual encounters with adult men because of their sexual orientation (Balsam, et al., 2005). For instance, gay and bisexual boys/adolescents may put themselves at risk while seeking out adults to discuss their sexual orientation; or may seek out intimate relationships with adult men, which they find difficult to pursue with their peers. This theory implies that a homosexual or bisexual sexual orientation precedes a boy's sexual contact with an adult male.

The available research dedicated to the relationship between CSA and sexual orientation sheds some light on the subject. Gilgun and Reiser (1990) interviewed three men who were sexually abused as children. The three interviewees were asked about their CSA experiences, about how they identified sexually before the abuse, and about how they identified sexually at the time of the interview. One participant identified as heterosexual, one participant identified as homosexual, and the third participant was unsure about his sexual orientation but most closely identified as bisexual. Gilgun and Reiser's (1990) interviews illuminate potential commonalties in the long term effects of sexual abuse of males. The article notes the strain on platonic and romantic relationships that these men's abuse has created. For instance, the man who identified as heterosexual expressed difficulties is forming relationships with other men as a result of the sexual

abuse by his father. He also noted that while he felt secure in his sexual orientation, he felt a lot of anger towards gay men and shame about the abuse.

The interviewee who identified as homosexual noted mixed feelings about his abuse by his uncle. He described feeling disgusted, ashamed, and aroused by the experience. He told the interviewers that he disliked being forced into sexual contact with his uncle, but also recalls that he enjoyed being close to a man. In his adult life, he felt shame about his own sexuality (homosexual,) a feeling that he believed stemmed from his CSA.

While the first two men believed that their sexual orientation was not affected by their CSA, the third interviewee believed that his sexual abuse by his teacher directly affected his adult sexual orientation. He recalled no interest in men or boys before the abuse but felt that afterwards he began to have sexual feelings towards men. About the abuse, the interviewee recalled "hating everything about it" but noted that he did respond physically to the sexual contact. This man also noted shame about his CSA and his sexuality as an adult. He noted that he remains confused about his sexual orientation and is sure that his confusion was a result of is abuse.

Though a small sample size (limiting its generalizability,) the three interviews in this study suggest that survivors of abuse may have a variety of conflicting and confusing thoughts and feelings about their experience both as a child and as an adult. This study also points out that abuse survivors may have a variety of thoughts and feelings about how CSA has affected their sexual orientation.

Tomeo, et al. (2001) compared the CSA histories of 942 self-identified

heterosexual and homosexual men and women. One hundred twenty-four (124) of the sampled men identified as homosexual and 153 of the sampled women identified as homosexual. The authors did not report the numbers of heterosexual participants by sex. CSA was assessed by asking participants to report if they had had "sexual contact" with a person five-or-more years older than the participant before the participant was 16 years old. Participants were also asked the sex of the older person. Results indicated a large discrepancy between gay men who report having sexual experience with an adult man as a child (45.5%) and heterosexual men who report having a sexual experience with an adult man as a child (6.7%) (Tomeo, et al., 2001). The authors remark that their findings cannot be used to infer causation and are therefore uncertain of the nature of the relationship between CSA and sexual orientation.

Balsam, Rothblum, and Beauchaine (2005) conducted a similar study comparing the abuse histories of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals to abuse histories of heterosexual men and women. The study examined sexual, physical, and psychological abuse in these individuals during childhood and in their adult lives. The researchers recruited self identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual participants and asked the participants to recruit one sibling to also complete the study, which resulted in a total of 1,245 participants, including 796 women and 449 men. Of whom, 525 identified as heterosexual, 163 identified as bisexual, and 557 identified as homosexual. Childhood sexual abuse was assessed using a selection of questions from the Childhood Maltreatment Interview Schedule – Short Form. Participants were also asked to list all sexual activities perpetrated on them before their 18th birthday by someone at least 5 or

more years older than the participant and/or by someone less than 5 years older than them, who used force or coercion to initiate sexual activities. Their results indicated that gay men (31.8%) and bisexual men (44.1%) were more than twice as likely to experience childhood sexual abuse than heterosexual men (12.8%).

It seems important to note that bisexual men experienced the highest prevalence of childhood sexual abuse when compared to both heterosexual and gay men. Although not noted by the researchers as significant, this difference is noteworthy as it may denote an *uncertainty* or *confusion* about ones sexual orientation as a result of sexual abuse. For instance, in the Gilgun and Reiser (1990) interviews, the interviewee that felt that his sexual orientation was most affected by the abuse, expressed uncertainty and confusion about his sexual orientation. When asked how he would describe himself sexually, he most closely identified as bisexual. When respondents with similar confusion about their sexual orientation are limited to choices printed on a page to describe their sexuality, "bisexual" may be truest answer available. Balsam, Rothblum, and Beauchaine (2005) do discuss the need for more research including bisexual participants in light of their results and similarly resulting previous research.

Eskin et al. (2005) studied the relationship between CSA, sexual orientation, and suicide ideation in1262 men and women in Turkey. To assess sexual orientation, participants were asked to respond "yes," "no," or "do not remember" to the following (4) questions: (1) Have you ever felt a sexual desire for someone of your own sex? (2) Do you feel sexual desire for someone of your own sex right now? (3) Have you ever been intimate with someone of your own sex which resulted in sexual arousal? (4) Have

you ever had a relationship with someone of your own sex which resulted in sexual orgasm? The final question (5) asked participants to indicate which sexual identity best describe them—heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. Current same-sex attraction (question 2,) same-sex sexual behavior (question 3,) and sexual identity (question 5) were used as criterion variables to predict sexual orientation from CSA. To assess child sexual abuse, participants were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to the following statements: (1) someone tried to touch me in a sexual way or tried to make me touch them, (2) someone tired to make me do sexual things or watch sexual things, (3) I believe I was sexually abused by someone, (4) I had a sexual relationship with an adult person, (5) someone threatened to hurt me or tell lies about me unless I did something sexual with them. For each item the sex of the perpetrator was also asked about. Rather than define a CSA and non-CSA group, participants received a CSA score, which was used in regression analyses. Results indicated three statistically significant gender differences with regard to CSA. More males (9.1%) than females reported that they had a sexual relationship with an adult person as a child. More females (26.0%) than males (19.8%) reported that someone tried to touch them or have themselves touched in a sexual way. Lastly, more females (9.0%) than males (5.5%) reported that when they were a child, they were sexually abuse. Results also indicated that CSA was predictive of same-sex behaviors, but not same-sex attraction or a homosexual sexual identity. Their results also indicate that male CSA survivors abused by male perpetrators were more likely to exhibit homosexual attractions and homosexual behaviors than male CSA survivors abused by female perpetrators.

Other researchers have also noted a relationship between child sexual abuse and sexual orientation even when the specific purpose of their research was not the examination of such a relationship. For instance, Holmes and Slap (1998) conducted a meta-analysis investigating the prevalence and correlates of the sexual abuse of boys. Their research investigated 166 studies representing 149 abuse samples. Among their results, these researchers reported that abused males were up to 7 times more likely to self-identify as gay or bisexual than men who had not been abused. Myers (1989) interviewed and observed 14 men with CSA histories in order to investigate the long-term the psychological effects of sexual abuse. (Myers' [1989] noted repression, denial, PTSD, low self-esteem, and body images concerns as the most prevalent among his sample.) In addition to his results about the psychological wellbeing of these men, Myers also describes the prevalence of homosexuality and sexual confusion among his sample. Of the 14 men in Myers' sample, eight self-identified as homosexual, one identified as bisexual, one identified as asexual, and four identified as heterosexual. Myers (1989) also noted that 9 of the 14 men reported current or past confusion about their sexual orientation. Additionally, of the four heterosexual men, only one reported never doubting his heterosexuality.

Methodological Issues:

Categorical Definition of Sexual Orientation

The Balsam, Rothblum, and Beauchaine (2005) research is pivotal in that it allowed for its participants to identify themselves as bisexual, rather than heterosexual or

homosexual only. Eskin et al.'s (2005) study further expands how sexuality is conceptualized in research related to CSA by asking participants about their sexual behaviors and sexual attractions in addition to their sexual identity. This is a break from strictly dichotomous views of sexual orientation and sexual identity. However, more current sexual orientation and sexual identity theories, including those of Alfred Kinsey, Fritz Klein, and Randall Sell support an even more nuanced continuum of sexuality (Sell, unpublished; Klein, *et al*, 1985; Kinsey, 1948) than is represented in these studies. To gain a better understanding of how sexuality may be affected by early sexual experiences and abuse, a less absolute categorization of sexual orientation and sexual identity is warranted—one that examines the many facets of sexual orientation in a way that is continuous and not dichotomous.

Objective Constructions of Sexual Abuse

Differences in prevalence estimates and other outcomes related to CSA may be directly affected by how child sexual abuse is operationalized (West, 1998). Differences may include how "childhood" is defined. For instance, some authorities consider childhood to end at the onset of puberty, while other authorities may consider childhood to last until the age of eighteen (West, 1998). This variation in research definitions is problematic in that it obscures the differences between what sexual contact and sexuality may mean for a prepubescent child and a post pubescent adolescent. A sexual experience (consensual or not) will be interpreted differently and have different effects on a seven year old than on a seventeen year old. An individual study or a body of literature on the topic that includes such a broad age range blanketly labeled as "child" (without

qualification) with likely produce both confounding and erroneous results. Most surveys also specify a minimum age range (e.g. five years or more years older than the study participant) between the child and older individual as a definition of CSA. This definition can also be problematic as it allows for sexual contact between juveniles to be classified as abuse. A more precise study might measure and control for age at the time of sexual contact or distinguish between early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence.

Differences in operational definitions of CSA may also include what incidents are counted as "sexual (abusive) experiences." Some surveys ask only about experiences which include genital contact or touching with clearly sexual intent; while other surveys extend questions to include non-contact experiences such as exposure to pornography, adult sexual exhibitionism, sexual invitations, and verbal indecency (West, 1998). This range in classification of abuse creates similar difficulties with noting the prevalence and effects of CSA. For instance, Nash and West (1985) point out that estimates of CSA prevalence may increase by nearly 100% when non-contact cases are included (as cited in West, 1998). A more precise study might ask about each type of sexual event separately enabling inclusion or exclusion of non-contact sexual events.

Subjective Constructions of Sexual Abuse

Objective measures of abuse may be problematic in psychological research. Research indicates that there are both individual and gender differences in the subjective interpretation of childhood sexual experiences as abuse (West, 1998). Additionally, research on both physical and sexual abuse provides empirical evidence that objective

categorizations of abuse in research can lead to inaccurate and/or conflicting results (Giant & Vartanian, 2003; Steever, et al., 2001; West, 1998). A measure of CSA which considers the *individual's* attitudes towards the sexual experience—a subjective one—may more accurately capture how abuse affects an individual.

Research on CSA of both males and females indicates that there are gender differences in the response to sexual experiences as a child and adolescent—this is likely due in part to the difference in how our culture views the sexuality of males and the sexuality of females. Research on a non-clinical sample of men and women indicates that women are more likely to report short-term (immediate) and long-term (retrospective) negative reactions to early sexual experiences and males are more likely to report short term and long term neutral or positive reactions to early sexual experiences (West, 1998). West (1998) suggests that the difference in attitudes towards early sexual experiences may further diverge with age; he notes that "girls who have been seduced, even if they were compliant at the time, when they later acquire conventional attitudes, may look back on the event with shame and guilt or with anger against the perpetrator. . . . boys' attitudes grow in the oppose direction as they absorb a macho image and want to portray themselves as ever eager for and in control of sexual situations" (p. 546). West's research points out the necessity for specific exploration of male CSA and additionally points out objective classifications of "abuse" are, at the very least, gender biased in one direction or another.

Although various factors may contribute to how individuals interpret their ("abusive") experiences, there is reason to believe that their subjective perceptions may

be a more reliable predictor of outcome effects. Research on parental aggressiveness and spanking indicates that objectively-similar aggressive behaviors are rated differently in terms of whether the recipient subjectively experienced them as abusive. Further, this research indicates that it is the subjective evaluation of the experience over the objective nature of the experience that is the best predictor of positive or negative outcomes related to it (Giant & Vartanian, 2003). That is, the psychological outcomes of physical punishment and aggression are contingent on how the individual conceptualizes the event, rather than, necessarily, the degree of the physicality inherent to the event. In other words, if a child believes that her or his physical punishment is abusive, s/he is more likely to manifest the negative psychological outcomes related to abuse. A child that does not believe that their physical punishment is abusive is less likely to manifest negative psychological outcomes related to abuse. This line of research indicates that because what-is or what-is-not abuse/abusive is not the same for every individual, abuse cannot always be objectively determined. Giant and Vartanian (2003) conclude that an individual's perception of their physical punishment is a better predictor of psychological outcomes than is objective ratings. They suggest that future research regarding aggressive behaviors account for how an individual characterizes his/her experience when examining psychological outcomes.

Research in the area of subjectivity related to *sexual* abuse reports similar findings. Steever, *et al* (2001) surveyed sixty adult men who, as children, were sexually abused or who had sexual contact with a person five or more years older than them. His research investigated the relationship between CSA in men and psychological distress. Of

the researchers' sample, twenty men identified themselves as abuse survivors, twenty men admitted to being "coerced or forced" into sexual contact but did not consider the contact abusive, and twenty men had childhood sexual experiences that they did not consider abusive or coercive. Steever's results indicated that men who identified themselves as abuse survivors were twice as likely to report psychological distress in adulthood than men in the other two groups. (It should be noted that it is also possible that men in psychological distress [whatever the cause] are more likely recall their childhood sexual experiences as abusive.)

These studies suggest that individual realities related to sexual abuse may be subjectively constructed and that individual outcomes may vary based on those constructions. As such, the proposed research will make a distinction between individuals that interpret childhood and adolescent sexual experiences as abuse and those who do not. This construction will be compared to conventional methods of classifying abuse, in order to note any potential similarities or potential differences. It may be that an individual's interpretation of their sexual encounter is an important determining factor in what effect the encounter has on his sexual orientation.

Chapter 3: Proposed Research Study

Purpose

Men who have been sexually abused as children remain a largely uninvestigated population in psychological research. The literature that is available has generally failed to take into account the natural sexuality of children and adolescents and has rarely distinguished between men who have had sexual experiences as children that they have subjectively interpreted as abusive and men who have had sexual experiences as children that they have not interpreted them as abusive. Additionally, no research has utilized a contemporary method of assessing sexual orientation in a study regarding sexual abuse. This study will assess sexual orientation by using Klein's Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG,) by utilizing the KSOG, which further distinguishes between, sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, sexual attraction, emotional preference, the proposed research would more precisely uncover what aspects of sexuality are affected by early sexual experiences and sexual abuse. In addition, this research will request that its participants describe via open ended written response how their sexual orientation has been affected by childhood sexual experience or childhood sexual abuse in order to gain a qualitative understanding of the relationship between child sexual experience/abuse and sexual orientation.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Men who have had childhood sexual experiences, which they *do not* interpret as abuse or negative, with a man five or more years older than them will indicate that they have/experience more homosexual sexual attractions (1a,) sexual behaviors (1b,) sexual fantasies (1c,) and emotional attractions (1d) than men with no childhood or abusive sexual experiences (NSA/Control Group.)

Hypothesis 2

Men who have had childhood sexual experiences, which they *do* interpret as abuse or negative, with a man five or more years older than them will indicate that they have/experience more homosexual sexual attractions (2a,) sexual behaviors (2b,) and sexual fantasies (2c) than the Control Group. However, their emotional attractions (2d) will not significantly differ from the Control Group.

Hypothesis 3

Higher positive rating of childhood sexual experiences and lower negative ratings of childhood sexual experiences will be related to greater same-sex attractions, behaviors, fantasies, behaviors, emotions, and overall homosexual orientation among men with childhood sexual experiences/abuse.

Hypothesis 4

There is a relationship between sexual identity (cf. sexual orientation) and early sexual experiences/sexual abuse. That is, these variables are not independent of one another.

Method

Participants:

Participants will be (at least) 200 males who report having had some sexual experience with a person 5 or more years older than them before the age of 18 and (at least) 100 males who reporting having no such childhood sexual experiences. , The sample will primarily be recruited online. Advertisements will be placed on various online message boards and online communities directing potential participants to the URL of the survey. Additionally, participants will be provided with the supervising psychologist's contact information in the event of psychological distress related to the participation of the survey. Participation will be limited to adult males who are 18 years of age or older.

Measures:

Demographic Information. Participants will be asked to provide demographic information, including age, ethnicity, race, education level, current relationship status, and sexual identity. Regarding their sexual identity (as distinct from sexual orientation,) participants will be asked to choose which best describes them: heterosexual (straight,) homosexual (gay,) bisexual, or bi-curious/questioning.

Klein Sexual Orientation Grid. The Klein sexual orientation grid (KSOG) is a

valid and reliable (.94 - .97) (Dessens, et al., 2000; Klein, Sepekoff, & Wolf, 1985) measure of sexual proclivities that expands on the Kinsey's scaled measure of sexual orientation. Like Kinsey's scales, Klein's grid uses a 7 point scale, where 1 indicates exclusively heterosexual or other sex only, 4 indicates both sexes equally, and 7 indicates exclusively homosexual or same sex only. The KSOG differs from the Kinsey scale in that it measures various aspects of a person's sexuality. Individuals respond on a 1 – 7 scale (noted above) to seven separate items: sexual attraction, sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, emotional attraction, social preference, lifestyle preference, and, self-identification. Additionally, the KSOG allows for measurements at different temporal points in an individuals life. For the purposes of this study current sexual attraction, sexual behavior, sexual fantasy, and emotion attraction will be assessed. See Appendix A.

Childhood Sexual Experiences Assessment. Widom and Morris (1997) suggest that the most effective way to assess child sexual abuse is to inquire about participants' childhood sexual experiences and then ask participants if they considered any of these experiences to be abusive. For the purposes of this study, the scale developed my Widom and Morris (1997) for the assessment of adults who were sexually abused as children will be used. Widom and Morris (1997) report that this method of assessing CSA is both reliable and valid, although they unfortunately do not report specific reliability and validity estimates. Participants will be presented with a list (developed by Widom and Morris [1997]) of sexually explicit behaviors (ranging from "an invitation or request to do something sexual" to "sexual intercourse") and give

responses to the following: “Before the age of 18, did you have any of the following sexual experiences? If yes, please indicate your age at the earliest occurrence of the experience, and the age and sex of the other person involved.” Participants will also be asked to indicate (separately) their positive and negative feelings about their childhood sexual experiences on two 5-point Likert scales (one positive and one negative): “In considering your sexual experiences before you were 18, how would you rate the degree of positive and negative feelings you have about each of those experiences.” (This is a change from Widom and Morris’ (1997) method and has been added to gather a more subjective and continuous assessment of participants childhood sexual experiences.) Participants will also be asked to write about how their childhood sexual experiences with an adult have affected them. Lastly, participants will be asked “were you ever sexually abused before the age of eighteen?” See Appendix B.

Procedure

Approval of the Human Subjects Committee

This study will comply with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association and the University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board. Prior to beginning research, all study materials will be submitted to the Departmental Review Committee within the Department of Educational Psychology and the Intuitional Review Board of the University of Texas.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants will be primarily be recruited via online message boards, chat

rooms, and online communities. Because this research concerns a specific population, message boards, chat rooms, and online communities related to male sexual abuse and child abuse (e.g. online support groups) will specifically be targeted. Posts made on message boards and chat rooms or distributed by online community leaders will direct participants to website that will begin the survey. Because sexual abuse is a private topic, subjects might be less willing to participate in a study about this topic if in-person participation was required. Online recruitment and study participation will provide participants with anonymity, which may increase the likelihood that they will partake in and accurately complete the survey. Online recruitment and assessment will also allow access to a broader demographic than would be available in a college sample. Because the survey will be completed online, participants will be anonymous and only identified by their internet service provider's IP address in order to protect against participants completing the survey multiple times. Prior to giving any information, participants will be directed to an informed consent document and asked to read it before continuing. Participants will be informed that they may stop taking the survey at any time. Participants will also need to verify that they are 18 years or older before proceeding. Participants will also be informed that they may contact the supervising psychologist in the event of mental distress related to the taking of the survey, whose information will be provided.

Data Collection

After informed consent has been received, participants will complete the aforementioned measures online. The initial questions on the survey will be "What is

your sex?" and "What is your age?" Individuals responding anything other than "male" or with an age less than 18 years will be directed to the exit of the survey and thanked for their participation.

Chapter 4: Data Analyses and Expected Results

The hypotheses for the proposed study will be tested using several statistical procedures. Prior to testing the research hypotheses, descriptive statistics will be computed including means, standard deviations, ranges, and minimum and maximum values for demographic data and each of the measures.

Participants' responses to questions about their sexual histories will be used to categorize them into one of three groups. These groups are defined as follows: (1) No Sexual Abuse (NSA)group--men that report no childhood sexual experiences with a person significantly older than them and who report no adult sexual abuse, (2) Childhood Sexual Experiences (CSE) group--men that report a history of childhood sexual experiences with a male significantly older than them but who do not label the experience abusive, and (3) Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) group--men that report a history of childhood sexual experiences with a male significantly older than them and who label those experiences abusive. The NSA will serve as the control group for this study. For the purposes of these analyses, "childhood" will be defined as younger than 18 years and "significantly older" will be defined as five years older or more. These definitions are consistent with contemporary research in this field (Balsam, *et al,* 2005; Steever, *et al*, 2001; Duncan & Duncan, 1998). Men reporting childhood sexual experiences or abuse by an adult female will be omitted from this sample as it is beyond the scope of this research.

Positive and negative ratings of childhood sexual experiences will be averaged

(mean) for each participant who reported having a childhood sexual experience with a male five or more years older than the participant. This will produce a composite child sexual experience positive attitudes score and a composite child sexual experience negative attitudes score for each participant reporting a childhood sexual experience with an adult.

T-tests will be run to determine if there is a statistical difference between groups CSA and CSE on their attitudes (positivity and negativity) about their early sexual experiences. One t-test will be run to test for a statistical difference on the composite positive attitudes scale and another t-test will be run to test for statistical difference on the composite negative attitudes scale. The independent variable for these analyses will be primary participant group (CSA and CSE) and the dependent variable will be the positive and negative attitudes scales. The alpha for these analyses will be set at .05. Results should indicate a statistically significant difference between groups CSA and CSE on both their positive and negative attitudes towards sexual orientation. That is, group CSA would be higher in negativity and lower in positivity than group CSE. These results would provide validity for assessing positive and negative attitudes about child sexual experiences in this way.

It has been hypothesized the Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and Child Sexual Experience (CSE) groups would have more homosexual sexual attractions, sexual behaviors, and sexual fantasies than men with no intergenerational childhood sexual experiences. It has additionally been hypothesized that group CSE would have more homosexual emotional attractions than the control group (NSA), while group CSA

would not significantly differ from the control group. In order to test these hypotheses one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) will be used. The assumption of normality will be tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Goodness-of-Fit test. The assumption of homogeneity of variances will be tested using Levene's test for Homogeneity of Variances. The independent variable for these analyses will be primary participant group (Child Sexual Abuse [CSA,] Child Sexual Experience [CSE,] and No Sexual Experience/control [NSA].) The dependent variable for these analyses will be the KSOG. In order to test all four KSOG items, four one-way ANOVAs will be run—one for each of the subscales. The alpha for these analyses will be set at .05.

Given significant omnibus F tests, post hoc (Tukey's HSD) tests will be run to determine significant differences between each pair of groups for each ANOVA on the KSOG subscale of interest. Pairwise comparisons between groups CSA and NSA, as well as CSE and NSA on sexual attraction, sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, and emotional attraction will determine if the differences between groups on these particular items are significant.

In order to support these hypotheses, a significant F followed by post-hoc tests should indicate significant differences between primary groups regarding their sexual orientation. Specifically, results supporting hypothesis 1 would indicate that individuals who have had an early sexual experience (not rated as abuses) with an older male before the age of 18 have more homosexual sexual attractions, homosexual sexual behaviors, homosexual sexual fantasies, and homosexual emotion attractions than individuals in the control (NSA) group. These results would address whether or not

there is a significant difference between men with childhood sexual experiences not interpreted as abuse and men with no childhood sexual experiences on their sexual orientation as measured by the KSOG.

Results supporting hypothesis 2 would indicate that individuals who had been sexually *abused* (childhood sexual experience rated as abuse) as children have more homosexual sexual attractions, homosexual sexual behaviors, homosexual sexual fantasies and *less* homosexual emotional attractions than individuals in the control (NSA) group. These results would address whether or not there is a significant difference between men with childhood sexual experiences interpreted as abuse and men with no childhood sexual experiences on their sexual orientation as measured by the KSOG.

In order to test if there is a relationship between sexual orientation and positive/negative attitudes towards childhood sexual experiences, four multiple regression analyses will be run using groups CSE and CSA (participants who report any childhood sexual experience with an adult male)—one for each of the KSOG subscales as the dependent variable. In each of these analyses the KSOG scale of interest (dependent variables) will be regressed onto the age of the participant at the time of the sexual incident, child sexual experience positive attitudes, and child sexual experience negative attitudes (independent variables.) (Age will be added to this analysis to control for the notion that males generally find sexual experiences more positive and less negative as they enter into adolescence [West, 1998.]) For each analysis, significant ($p<.05$) b values would indicate there is a statistically significant relationship

between the KSOG scale in question and the independent variable in question. The R^2 coefficient will also be examined to determining the variance accounted for by the independent variables. These analyses would highlight what relationship there is between the participants' attitudes about his childhood sexual experience and his sexuality. It is hypothesized that higher positive attitudes about childhood sexual experiences will predict more homosexual orientation on KSOG scales. Similarly, it is hypothesized that higher negative attitudes about childhood sexual experiences will predict less homosexual orientation on KSOG scales.

In order to test whether the CSA, CSE, and NSA groups significantly varied in their self-reported sexual identity a two-way Chi-Square analysis will be used. The two-way Chi-Square analysis (Test of Independence) examines the null hypothesis that two characteristics (in this case childhood sexual experiences and sexual identity) are independent from one another. In this analysis, the variables will be primary participant grouping (CSE, CSA, and NSA) and self-reported sexual identity. If sexual identity and sexual abuse/early sexual experience are unrelated, one would expect to find the same proportion of participants in each cell; that is, the same proportion of sexual identities in each sexual abuse/early sexual experience group. Chi-Square is calculated by summing the square of the difference between the expected frequency and the observed frequency divided by the expected frequency. Significance will be determined using a statistical computer program, such as SPSS. The alpha level for this analysis will be set at .05.

This analysis will give insight into whether there is a relationship between

sexual abuse/early sexual contact and sexual identity. This is distinct from the sexual orientation measures (KSOG) in that concerns how men *identify themselves* sexually and seeks to understand if self-identification has any relationship to sexual abuse or early sexual experiences. It is hypothesized that there will be a statistically significant relationship between sexual identity and early sexual experience are not independent of one another.

In order to support this hypothesis a chi-square test of independence should reveal a significant statistic. This result would indicate that sexual identity and early sexual experiences/sexual abuse are not independent of one another and that there is a relationship between them and may suggest that sexual abuse and early sexual experiences affect how individuals define themselves with regard to sexual identity.

Chapter 5: Summary, Limitations, and Recommendations

Summary and Implications

The proposed research will consider the relationship between childhood sexual experiences and sexual orientation/identity while distinguishing between childhood sexual abuse and childhood sexual experiences (not classified as abuse) as subjectively interpreted by the participant. Additionally this research will consider how participants' positive and negative attitudes towards their child sexual experiences are related to their sexual orientation. Supported hypotheses will provide evidence for: (1) a relationship between the sexual abuse of boys by an older male and homosexual sexual attractions, sexual behaviors, sexual fantasies, and emotional attractions; (2) a relationship between the childhood sexual experiences of boys with an older male and homosexual sexual attractions, sexual behaviors, and sexual fantasies; (3) a relationship between sexual identity and sexual abuse/early sexual experience status, and (4) a relationship between participants' attitudes about their childhood sexual experience with an older male and homosexual sexual attractions, sexual behaviors, and sexual fantasies.

Results confirming these hypotheses would suggest that childhood sexual experiences and childhood sexual abuse are similar in their effects on sexual attraction, sexual behaviors, and sexual fantasies, but differ in their effect on emotional attraction. These results would evidence a key distinction between men who interpret their childhood sexual contact as abuse and those who do not. A possible explanation may

be that men who felt that their childhood sexual contact was not abusive have positive memories and emotions about the relationship with the older male in addition to the sexual/physical sensations associated with the experience, which may cause these men, in adulthood, to not only seek out, be drawn to, and fantasize about the sexual physical pleasure associated with the experience, but the homosexual emotional connection as well. Conversely, men who view their experience as abusive may only be compelled by the physical pleasure of the experience. In both cases, the homosexual sexual attractions, behaviors, and fantasies as related to the early sexual experience may be explained by the young age at which these men had a homosexual sexual experience—a time at which, according to behavioral theorists, individuals are still be developing their sexual repertoires (Letourneau, 1997). Another possible explanation resides in psychoanalytic theory, which would suggest that men who had a sexual experience or were abuse in childhood may unconsciously be seeking to gain mastery over those experiences.

Expected results would also suggest that regardless of whether or not participants classified their sexual experiences as abusive, their attitudes (positive and negative) about the sexual experience will also be predictive of their sexual orientation. It is hypothesized that men with higher positive attitudes about the childhood sexual experiences will have more homosexual orientations (as rated by the KSOG) and men with higher negative attitudes about their childhood sexual experiences will have less homosexual orientations.

It is also expected that sexual abuse/early sexual experience status not only

affects individuals' sexual orientation, but also affects how they define themselves sexually—that is, their sexual identity. Predicted results would confirm that there is an association between sexual identity and sexual abuse/early sexual experience status.

Previous research has noted a relationship between CSA and homosexuality; however, most of this research has only examined the relationship quantitatively. In addition to the qualitative data, the proposed research will gather qualitative data from the participants about how their childhood sexual experience relate to their (adult) sexual orientation. Summary and results from an actual study would consider the written responses of the participants in forming conclusions and suggesting directions for future research.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Though the proposed study is novel and may be useful to both researchers and clinicians, it has clear limitations that should be addressed.

Several methodological issues are apparent. The generalizability of this study to all participants who have had childhood sexual experiences or who have been sexually abused as children is limited due to the self-selecting nature of the sample. Due to self-selection error, this sample may not accurately represent the broader population of interest. Individuals choosing to partake in the study may differ in some important aspect from individuals choosing not to partake in the study.

Generalizability is further affected by potential coverage error—bias introduced into a study due to the exclusion of certain groups. In this case, only individuals with

access to internet access were able to partake in the study.

The proposed study uses the internet to both recruit and assess study participants. While the use of the internet is beneficial in its potential to reach a wide demographic of individuals and allows for anonymity of participants, which would be unlikely with a university sample, the use of the internet for participant recruitment in social research is relatively new. Although some researchers have reported difficulty recruiting research participants using the internet (Koo & Skinner, 2005), this researcher has successfully utilized internet recruitment in previous research (Gordon & Sherry, 2006). However, methods have yet to be established that verify participant attributes and evaluate and adjust for potential biases associated with internet recruitment. This may yield unforeseen limitations.

The proposed study relies on self-report measures which are susceptible to cognitive bias of participants (Hanita, 2000). Future research could be strengthened by the use of semi-structured interviews to assess sexual abuse, sexual experiences, sexual orientation, and sexual identity.

Additionally, due to the lack of measures which assess childhood sexual abuse and sexual experiences in a subjective way, this study relies on only one measure to assess these experiences, which may result in mono-method bias and is a threat to construct validity (Trochim, 2006). Future research might employ a pilot study to ensure that this method of assessing sexual abuse and sexual experiences behaves has theoretically expected. Future research might also employ a longitudinal design, which

would allow for a closer evaluation of the development of participants sexual orientation and sexual identity following child or adult sexual abuse.

Given the hypothetical nature of the Data Analysis section of this prospectus, it is difficult to ensure the accuracy of the statistical analyses that have been proposed without knowing the nature and amount of actual data. In a non-hypothetical data analysis, statistical methods would be selected only after the data have been collected and their make-up determined.

The current study uses a Chi-Square Test of Independence to determine if there is a relationship between sexual identity and sexual abuse and childhood sexual experiences. While this method is useful in determining if a relationship exists, it does not describe the nature of that relationship. Future research might employ measures of sexual identity and/or sexual abuse/experience that allow for a more detailed analysis of the relationship between sexual identity and sexual abuse and early sexual experiences.

While this study is innovative in its distinction between men who interpret their childhood sexual experiences as abuse and those who do not, it is this innovation that potentially limits this study as there are no established methods or measures for distinguishing between sexual contact that is subjectively rated as abuse and sexual contact that is not.

Chapter 6: Clinical Implications

The wealth of research about sexual abuse primarily consists of female samples. Although the population of men and boys who have been sexual abused is significant, there remains an insufficient amount of research dedicated to them. One supposes that this may be due to the assertion that boys and men are tough enough to handle abuse or that males unceasingly desire sex and so cannot be abused. Nevertheless, the sexual abuse of boys and men is real and as a community charged with treating this population, it is essential that more research be done to addresses the concerns and experiences specific to these men.

In pursuing this research, it is necessary that psychologists and researchers inquire fully into the nature of relations labeled as “abuse” or “abusive” by persons other than the affected individual. While in inaccurate distinctions can result in unclear results with regard to research, inaccurate distinctions in practice could result in deficient care. As the proposed research suggests, the psychological repercussions, prognosis, and treatment effects may vary based on subjective interpretations of sexual experiences. Thus, for conceptualization and treatment to be accurately aligned to the client’s needs, careful attention should be paid to individual experiences.

That sexual orientation may be affected by sexual abuse or childhood sexual experiences is not a novel concept. However, it remains to be adequately investigated or addressed within the literature. In treating a sexually abused male client or a client who reveals that he has had sexually experiences as a child, clinicians should be aware

of what potential effects might result from such experiences. Knowledge of an affected sexuality due to early sexual contact or sexual abuse could be helpful in providing clinicians with direction and expectations in their therapy with such a client.

Appendix A

Klein Sexual Orientation Grid and Sexual Identity Items

Instructions: Please answer the following questions with regards to your current sexually.

I am sexually attracted to:

1. other sex only
2. other sex mostly
3. other sex somewhat more
4. both sexes equally
5. same sex somewhat more
6. same sex mostly
7. same sex only

I engage in sexual behavior (kissing, oral sex, intercourse, etc) with:

1. other sex only
2. other sex mostly
3. other sex somewhat more
4. both sexes equally
5. same sex somewhat more
6. same sex mostly
7. same sex only

I have sexual fantasies about:

1. other sex only
2. other sex mostly
3. other sex somewhat more
4. both sexes equally
5. same sex somewhat more
6. same sex mostly
7. same sex only

I am emotionally attracted to:

1. other sex only
2. other sex mostly
3. other sex somewhat more
4. both sexes equally
5. same sex somewhat more
6. same sex mostly
7. same sex only

I currently identify as:

- Heterosexual
- Bi-Curious/Questioning
- Bisexual
- Homosexual

Appendix B

Childhood Sexual Experiences Assessment

Instructions: Please recall and answer the following questions to the best of your ability and as is true to your personal experience.

1. Before the age of 18, did you have any of the following sexual experiences? If yes, please indicate your age at the earliest occurrence of the experience, and the age and sex of the other person involved.

Sexual Experiences	YES	Your Age	Other's Age	Other's Sex	Positive Feelings	Negative Feelings
Requested to do something sexual						
Kissed/Hugged in a sexual way						
Person showed you their genitals						
You showed you their genitals						
Person fondled you sexually (over clothes)						
You fondled another person sexually (over clothes)						
Person touched your genitals						
You touched another person's genitals						
Attempted intercourse						
Intercourse						

2. In considering your sexual experiences before you were 18, how would you rate the degree of positive and negative feelings you have about each of those experiences?

- POSITIVITY: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

  (where 0 = Nothing positive about it and 5 = Extremely positive/enjoyable)

- NEGATIVITY: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

  (where 0 = No bother at all, 1 = a mild annoyance, and 5 = severely traumatic.)

3. We are interested in sexual experiences you had with a male 5 or more years older than you, before you were 18 years old, please write about what effect (if any) this experience had/has had on you.

4. Were you ever sexually abuse before the age of eighteen?

- Yes
- No

5. Were you ever sexually abused after the age of eighteen by a male?

- Yes
- No

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